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# Bridging the Social-Biomedical Divide : Uncovering Explanatory Conflicts in the Public Health Literature

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## Abstract

**Purpose and Research Objective:** Monism is the view that there is a single salient explanation for any given phenomenon in the natural world. Philosophers Helen Longino and C. Kenneth Waters have examined how monistic positions lead research programs to discredit other scientific approaches. This phenomenon presents a barrier to interdisciplinary research. To date, no study has sought to systematically characterize monistic conflicts in public health research. The present study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by uncovering instances of monism-derived conflict between the social and biomedical approaches in the public health literature on childhood obesity.

**Methods:** The project is a narrative literature review of review articles on childhood obesity in North America. Articles are collected from online health science databases and are examined using qualitative content analysis.

**Expected Results:** Completion of the literature search has revealed that the majority of articles concerning childhood obesity in North America emphasize biomedical approaches. Content analysis of these articles is expected to uncover monistic attitudes or connotations within the articles, using superlative, exclusive and pejorative language as empirical measures for instances of monism-derived conflict.

**Implications:** Monistic approaches to investigation are barriers to interdisciplinary research. Explanatory conflicts between research programs should be of interest to the field of public health given the discipline's focus on multifaceted health solutions. Understanding of the nature and extent of monism in public health can serve as a first step to eliminating such barriers.

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